



## DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE **TALKING POINTS**

TP-20-Crime

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# Democrats Work to Ensure the Safety of Schools and Communities

School violence does not occur in only one kind of community or only one area of our Nation. And there is no one solution to the problem. The only way we can make our children's schools safer is by working together—schools, families, law enforcement, business and community organizations, youth and faith-based organizations, and the media—to prevent violence in the first place.

Long before the Littleton tragedy, Democrats urged a comprehensive approach to reduce youth violence. At the beginning of this Congress and in the last Congress, Senate Democrats introduced comprehensive juvenile justice legislation. These bills balanced smart prevention with tough enforcement.

As the juvenile justice debate moves to the Senate floor, Democrats are united in their support of three leadership amendments that strike that same essential balance. The amendments are drawn from **S. 9**, the *Safe Schools, Safe Streets and Secure Borders Act*, and other Democratic proposals, and include provisions to prevent youth violence, improve after-school activities for our children, and ensure effective law enforcement.

**Youth Violence Prevention.** The Democratic amendments create a National Center for School Safety and Youth Violence. The center will serve as a national clearinghouse for information on proven strategies to reduce and respond to youth violence. In addition, the amendments expand the *Safe Schools and Healthy Students* program, which promotes partnerships involving schools, families, law enforcement and local mental health agencies to develop solutions—from truancy prevention, to mentoring, conflict resolution, early childhood development, and mental health services.

**Effective law enforcement.** The Democratic amendments expand the COPS program to help local communities hire police officers to work in schools; establish juvenile drug courts; and streamline procedures for Federal prosecutions of juveniles. In addition, the amendments increase penalties for certain gun offenses involving minors, and ban juvenile possession of assault weapons and high capacity ammunition clips.

**After-School Activities.** The Democratic amendments would provide more than one million children each year with access to good, safe after-school programs by adding \$600 million to the existing 21st Century Learning Centers program.

The Democratic youth violence initiatives are common sense ideas to help communities prevent violent behavior before it occurs. These initiatives also ensure that when violence does occur, juvenile offenders will be held accountable for their actions.

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